

Why youth?

How to involve youth in the strategy work for the next program period 2014-2020.



To create sustainable rural areas it is important to involve youth in the process of creating new local and regional strategies. It is vital that the youths involvement is real and that their knowledge and experiences are considered a resource in that process. This manual contains hands on tips on how to involve youth in the strategy process.

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Europeiska jordbruksfonden för
landsbygdsutveckling: Europa
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What are youth?

Youth is not a homogenous group. It's good to divide youth in different age categories. By doing so it's easier to reach them. Invite a few from each age group in order to get a good representation.

Suggested age groups:
children up to 12 years of age, 13-15 years, 16-19 years, 20-30 years



How to find youth?

There are different ways to spread the word when we want to involve youth in the strategy process. To get youth to come to a strategy meeting, getting the invitation from someone they know and trust might help. Therefore it's good to cooperate with local/regional bodies that already work with youth in that area. Inform about the purpose of the meeting and why it's important that youth are involved. In addition-post some posters, create a Facebook invitation and hand out flyers. Try to get a broad representation among those invited.

Local strategy meetings

To get youth involved in local strategy meetings, cooperate with youth associations, educational associations, youth workers, student bodies, field workers, job market projects and folk high-schools. It's also good to invite representatives from these different bodies to the meetings.

Regional strategy meetings

Try to have a wide perspective when inviting to regional strategy meetings. It might be interesting to invite the social executive, enterprise manager, public health manager and youth recreation leaders from the municipal. These people often have a strategic approach to regional questions regarding youth with different backgrounds. Other organizations to involve could be the scouts, natural recourse programs/schools and enterprise agencies.

How to create a good meeting?

To create an active meeting you need good planning, a good process leader and to follow up afterwards in order to get the participants to feel involved. Here are some examples on how to gather input concerning local development: general meeting, call on meeting, quick inventory of opinions.



General meeting

Make sure to involve young people in the organizer group, who's planning and executing the meeting. Make sure all participants have received an agenda and know the purpose and what's expected of them. Youth may also get involved as process leader or as "side-kick" during the meeting, to reflect upon answers and discussions during the meeting. Make the meeting as professional as possible. Offer good hosting and some nice snacks and if needed babysitting. This makes the participants feel appreciated!

Premises

When choosing the meeting place, make sure it feels safe and welcoming for both young and old. Therefore the meeting place should not be too familiar to anyone (municipal house or school). Preferably the location should be assessable by public transportation. It possible – offer pick up and arrange carpooling.

Time

Ask around what time is most suitable for the group attending the meeting. Be flexible! One solution might be arranging two identical meetings at different times to address different groups.

Break the ice!

It's good to have some sort of "ice breaker" or exercise to get the participants talking. For instance-ask the participants to line up depending where they live; from north to south.

How a general meeting can be organized:

Introduction

Create an atmosphere of security and interest in the group by first answering the following questions:

What will happen today? Why are we here today? What happens with the outcome/results? Who are present and why?

To involve everyone at the meeting, the process leader can ask the participants:

How many are students? Anyone active in a association? Anyone politically active?

Those who answer “yes” to a question stand up. Adjust the questions to those present, so that everyone gets an opportunity to stand up at least once. This is better than a traditional round of presentation, which often takes longer.

Process method

Rural area 2.0 is an intergenerational method to conduct a dialogue regarding rural development. The method is disposed as a game, where the players move around the game board and discuss different questions concerning their home village. During spring 2013, we are developing new questions that are applicable in the strategy work.

More information on <http://www.helasverige.se/kansli/projekt/landsbygd-20>

Conclusion

Give a big round of applause and aggrate everyone who participated and explain what will happen next. Collect everyone’s contact information and ask if they want further information and in that case how. Be flexible in how you offer follow-up. If possible-show a time schedule of the continuous work and invite the participants to future activities.

Catchwords to creating good local and regional meetings: playful, curious, humble, esthetic, creative, applicable, urgent.



Call on meeting

One option to a general meeting might be to visit an existing one in your area. Invite yourself to the school, youth club, job-seeker groups, local football club, municipal council and offer a brief process. Conduct them prior to a general meeting to raise awareness.

Introduction

Introduce yourself, why you want to gather the participant's opinions and what will happen with their conclusions and opinions.

Brainstorm

Pop some questions to the group and let them brainstorm;

Describe where you live and what is good? Develop what is good? What would make you stay in your village?

Give the participants some minutes to think about the most important answers to the questions. Pair up two and two and continue brainstorming. Each couple writes their thoughts and answers on post-its. Then allow each couple to present their post-its. Let the process leader categorize and summarize.

Conclusion

Tell what will happen next with the material and if possible show a time plan for the continuous work. Invite to future events. Provide contact information to those responsible for the process.

Quick inventory of opinions

As a complement to general meetings and call on meetings, the following activities might contribute to more opinions from more groups:

- Collect opinions and ideas by the local grocery store, at the buss, the gym, at the open pre-school or at a big workplace.
- Create an questionnaire with 3-5 questions for people to answer on a i-pad at the bus or on the train.
- Create a "confession booth" where people can record their oppinions.

Don't forget to applause and aggrate those who participate with ice cream for instance!



Final words

To involve more groups in the strategy work takes more time and dedication. However, the results are more sustainable and innovative in a long perspective. Treat the participants equal and try not to pick out youth as a particular group.

Good luck with creating the strategies!

The guide “Why youth” - How to involve youth in the strategy work for the next program period 2014-2020, is created by the association Rural Youth during spring of 2013.

www.u-land.se

*Photos: Patrik Ljungman (page 1), Josefina Andersson (page 3 and 5), Karin Back (page 4).
The illustration on page 2 was taken out during the event Ungagemang (Youngagement) in the town Fagersta in 2011, where 100 young people gathered and discussed visions for the countryside in the future. This illustration of the future shows one of these visions. The picture has been cropped.*

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